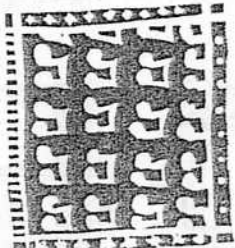


IFOLK MUSIC



Before the slaves were forced away from their homeland, the many rhythms and melodies of African

music had been a part of their everyday lives. There were songs for every occasion, including songs for work; songs for play; songs for hunting, boating, cowherding, and harvesting; battle songs; cradle songs; wedding songs; and songs of praise to honor important African figures.

In West Africa there were even special people, called *griots*, who kept history alive with both spoken word and song. *Griots* chanted facts about historical and political events and about family histories.

The tradition of having music for every occasion continued in America and became known as the slaves' folk

music. It included calls, work songs, and play songs.

Calls could be a high-pitched yell, a chant, or other musical-sounding tones shouted out as a kind of announcement or signal. Calls from the field helped the slaves stay in touch with one another. Calls signaled a time for work to begin or end. They also alerted workers that someone was approaching or got a fellow worker's attention. Or—with a simple "Ooh, here ooh"—they announced the caller's location.

Work songs were sung as the slaves labored. The words were about the kind of work being done. A leader selected and led the songs in "call-and-response" form. After the leader started with a line or two (the "call"), the group would answer with a chorus (the "response"). The leader paced

the songs carefully to match the pace of the work being done.

Slaves had very little time off. But whenever possible, slave children enjoyed play songs that allowed for running and jumping. Some of the songs called for patting, rising, and flying motions or were played in circles or line games.

For entertainment, the slaves enjoyed music and such dances as the "juba," which originally came from Africa. They also created special rhythmic sounds that were sometimes used in place of musical instruments to accompany dancing. They called the sounds "patting juba" and produced them by quickly alternating such motions as foot tapping, hand clapping, and thigh slapping. There's even a song called "Juba." And in the song, the word *juba* has come to mean "a little this, a little that."

